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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 KABUL 000662

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STATE FOR SA/FO (AMB MQUINN), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
OSD FOR BREZEEZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
REL NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF
TREASURY FOR D/S KIMMITT, APARAMESWARAN, AJEWELL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [KCERS](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT/KABUL: PROVINCIAL SECURITY ASSESSMENTS
DESIGNED TO DISRUPT SPRING OFFENSIVE

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Classified By: PRT DIRECTOR TOM PRASTER FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) Summary: A joint GOA - Coalition effort to address key problems in Zabul, Paktika, and Helmand Provinces could be a template for bringing greater stability to the southeast and help preclude an effective spring offensive by anti-government forces. In a series of meetings starting in late December, the GOA's National Security Council along with U.S., UN and others has developed a series of short-term plans to replace ineffective district officials, strengthen local security forces, improve the transportation infrastructure and distribute assistance in key areas. The hope is that such activity will undercut Taliban efforts to portray the central government as detached or ineffective and deny them a base among the local population. The focus has been short range, geared as it is to facing an expected tough Taliban spring offensive. Thus the things that can be changed significantly are limited by immediately available resources and GOA administrative capacity. In Helmand, narcotics and security are intersecting to pose a particular challenge. Whether the measures are successful or not, the exercise itself has proven useful for demonstrating GOA initiative and improving coordination inside the government and with the international community. End summary.

12. (C) In December, GOA National Directorate for Security (NDS) Director Amarullah Saleh told the Ambassador and Lieutenant General Eikenberry that the GOA has significant

intelligence on Taliban leaders and membership numbers in the southeast. However, the central government's lack of effective lines of authority and weak district governments have prevented NDS from using that information to disrupt Taliban activity. The Ambassador and CG suggested that the GOA develop specific plans that identified key areas of instability and how their problems might be addressed on a province-by-province basis in the run up to an anticipated Spring offensive. In the meantime, we promised to form an interagency group (including ISAF) to examine the same regions one by one, and determine how we might assist.

13. (SBU) As a result, we have attended a series of interagency meetings chaired by National Security Council Director Rassoul, and attended by NDS Director Saleh, Acting Minister of Interior Zarar, Minister of Defense Wardak, and Army Chief of Staff Bismullah Khan, or their representatives.

The international community has been represented by the Ambassador or Charge, USAID Director or representative, CFC-A Deputy Commander Air Vice Marshal Luker, ISAF Deputy Commander Major General Lane, and ISAF Polad Batori or Reconstruction Adviser Skye. OSC-A Deputy Director for Police Fitzgerald, British Ambassador Marsden and UNAMA Deputy Special Representative Alexander attended the meeting on Helmand. Governor Arman of Zabol attended the second meeting on that province, and Governors Mangel and Daud attended the Paktika and Helmand meetings, respectively.

14. (SBU) The GOA wanted to focus each meeting on a province of their choice, and we asked them to invite the governor to attend and present an assessment. For our part, we and CFC-A have coordinated with each other and the relevant PRT and have prepared papers on the provinces in advance, but have used them only to contribute ideas after the GOA has made their assistance requests. For the most part, that has been

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unnecessary, as the GOA side has presented detailed intelligence assessments and generally reasonable requests.

15. (C) Throughout the process, the Embassy and CFC-A have made the following points:

-- Actions need to be effective in the short term - the point of the exercise is to improve the GOA/Coalition ability to resist any spring offensive by anti-government forces.

-- As much as possible, the population should see the GOA delivering these improvements.

-- Whenever possible, local populations should contribute to the effort so they have a stake in the outcome.

-- We will not contribute additional resources to these provinces if the GOA has its own resources to use and unless necessary changes in provincial and district personnel, as identified by the GOA, are made.

-- Additional resource allocations must be focused and modest - although we are taking a province by province approach, we have to keep an eye on the cumulative effect of our changes.

-- Changes will be made within the context of our overall strategic programs.

16. (C) Although we have asked the GOA to come to the meetings with international partners after internal discussions are complete and they have decided on a course of action, we are often witnesses to prolonged debate on the GOA side of the table. Also, the discussions occasionally stray from the above points, especially from the governors, who are new to the process. However, overall we believe the process has resulted in a reasonable and doable set of remedies. The recent thrust of Karzai's direction from SCF (that GOA must take more responsibility itself, and not rely constantly on

the Coalition) has been evident throughout the process.

17. (SBU) The first three provinces discussed were Zabol, on December 31 and again on January 3, Paktika on January 8, and Helmand on January 19. On January 24, there was a follow-up meeting to review the recommendations and actions taken to date.

Zabol

18. (C) The government suggested concentrating on Shamulzai District, on the Pakistan border, and Dai Chopan bordering Uruzgan and a transit point for the Taliban. The following actions were discussed, with actions taken to date:

-- Remove both district Chiefs of Police, as well as CoPs in 3 other districts (GOA): MoI has made these changes. The governor traveled to Dai Chopan and explained the reasons for the changes.

-- Provide more trained ANP officers (This was originally assigned to OSC-A, but OSC-A subsequently delivered its police fielding plan to MOI; any reprioritization, OSC-A suggested, should be done by MOI): MOI announced on 1/24

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that it has assessed the province and no longer sees a need for more police, just better equipment.

-- More logistical support (vehicles and ammunition) for the Afghan National Police (ANP) in these districts: OSC-A has said it is prepared to ensure current police forces have full complement of basic equipment. List of supplemental equipment (heavy weapons, motorbikes) under review; some needs can be met but not all. AVM Luker also noted that MoI needs to work with OSC-A on redistribution of equipment because distribution is tied to new (not existing) units under the strategic ANP fielding plan.

-- Accelerate completion of Qalat radio transmitter which to reach the entire province, and distribute radios (CFC-A): It was determined that the FM station in Qalat, even when boosted, would not reach the target districts. Instead, programming for the AM radio station in Kandahar, which does reach, should carry programming of interest to the districts. Additional portable radios have been made available by CFC-A for distribution to selected districts.

-- Accelerate construction of Shinkay through Shamulzai Road (USAID): CFC-A Engineers estimated hard top cost of \$40 million, and gravel cost at \$12 million, both beyond the scope of this project. Instead, AID has begun preparing a food or cash for work program to do road repairs throughout the winter and spring.

-- Distribution of food stuffs (USAID): Food for Peace has prepositioned emergency staples in the region that can be issued after March 1 if there is no emergency in the interim. CFC-A has agreed to bring more food to Qalat if necessary, but AVM Luker suggested that, in accordance with President Karzai's wish that this work have an "Afghan face," that the GOA do final distribution. Minister Wardak said MOD can provide trucks, and helicopters if OSC-A can provide fuel. AVM Luker indicated that would be possible.

Paktika

19. (C) The government recommended a focus on Gomal District, which is the largest district and borders Pakistan. The following actions were discussed, with actions taken to date:

-- General Bismullah Khan to call Pakistani Vice Chief of Staff General Hyat about strengthening military-to-military

cooperation across the border (GOA). Call was placed through his deputy for operations.

-- Follow-up Bismullah's call through diplomatic channels (US Embassy): Ambassadors Neumann and Crocker, during a February 11 visit, stressed to President Karzai the importance we place on this initiative. Embassy Islamabad will follow up with the Pakistanis.

-- More ANP forces (GOA in consult with OSC-A): MOI wants to move in 100 new ANP, but has not yet identified a source. OSC-A noted they will soon have police mentors in Sharana for the ANP and ANBP.

-- Logistical support (vehicles and ammunition) for the

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ANP (OSC-A): OSC-A will transfer basic-issue equipment after redeployment of personnel. Additional equipment under consideration.

-- Movement of a small ANA element into the district (GOA): Minister Wardak promised to bring existing ANA units to full strength throughout the province, and to bring in an additional company dedicated to Gomal.

-- Increase NDS presence in the region (GOA): Awaiting decision of NDS, which Saleh says will hinge on sufficient support from ANP.

-- Food-for-Work initiatives (USAID): AID is in discussions with UNAMA to determine if they can better penetrate Gomal Province.

-- Increase emphasis on the PTS (amnesty for Taliban) in the district (GOA): GOA will try to persuade a former Taliban leader, who is now a member of the Meshrano Jirga, to visit the district and try and contact recalcitrant IAG leaders; however he is currently on the Haj.

Note: Sharana PRT Officer notes that the Gardez PTS head, Habibullah Mangal, has been very successful in Paktia Province and nominally covers Paktika as well. However, he does not have the vehicles, security detail, or communications equipment to travel to the area. We will explore with the GOA how to provide him the support he needs. End note.

Helmand

110. (C) The discussion on Helmand took a different turn, with an emphasis on province-wide institutional problems: the Highway Police and Border Police are actively involved in drug smuggling, renegade police chiefs own or control the police's vehicles and weapons (if they are fired the police resources will also disappear), and the educational system is breaking down under the weight of 100 plus students/class. It was noted by several officials that the Taliban is not strong in Helmand, but the GOA is particularly weak. The following actions were discussed, with actions taken to date:

-- Deploying 100 additional police under direction of the Governor (GOA): MOI has sent 100 police, and is in the process of sending another 100, all from the quick reaction unit in Kabul - this is a short-term solution. All need equipment.

-- Assess AHP and decide whether to disband them within the province (GOA): Hope to disband the AHP when have sufficient force in ANP and ANA. In the meantime, will move AHP HQ closer to Helmand so it can be monitored, and replace the chief.

-- MOD to increase presence over the next three months (GOA): Minister Wardak decided to move the ANA brigade from

Herat. In the interim he will ensure in-place units are at full strength.

-- Ministries of Finance and Education to resolve teachers' pay problems so they can expand hours to allow for

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three shifts of classes a day instead of one (GOA): Decision has been made to release the funds.

-- Food for Work to reconstruct schools (USAID): AID to work with government to implement Food for Work to construct security walls around schools and repair schools damaged by anti-government forces.

¶11. (C) In Helmand the issue of security from the Taliban is beginning to intersect with the need for security to conduct poppy eradication. This situation is different from that in other provinces. But if the Coalition/GOA can meet the challenge they could score a significant strategic victory.

¶12. (SBU) On February 4, the GOA convened another meeting to discuss Konar Province, with Nuristan to be discussed February 11. We will report on those meetings, and continue to update progress on these first three provinces, in subsequent cables.

¶13. (C) Comment: If the GOA continues to follow through, and we can fulfill our part - mobilizing assistance resources in the most dangerous districts, and redeploying or re-equipping 300-400 police are not easy tasks - it will have an effect on the spring offensive - although how great an effect is uncertain. Efforts to intensify cooperation with Pakistan on terrorist sanctuary and cross-border infiltration will play an important role. There has been a clear learning curve in the ministries concerned but the limited number of qualified subordinates makes it harder for the relevant ministries to keep up the pace of follow-up with every province added. The constant need for police reinforcements is unlikely to be met with trained personnel, as there is no adequate reserve to continue drawing upon. More and more untrained or partially trained recruits are likely to be used.

¶14. (SBU) What is certain is that the GOA has taken the initiative to identify obstacles to stability, developed a process to remove them, improved cooperation between crucial ministries, and strengthened its coordination with the international community - all things that will need to be done with increasing effectiveness if we are to ever beat the forces arrayed against us.

¶15. (U) Dushanbe minimize considered.
NEUMANN